

Federal employee does not have, the average.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I did not say the average Federal employee.

The gentleman does want to continue to compare apples to apples. The reason I use the NBA analogy is because they make far more than any of us contemplate ever making perhaps in our lifetime in a year.

Why do they do so? Because the marketplace demands that if an owner of an NBA team wants to have the opportunity of winning, he must hire the skill levels necessary to accomplish that objective. The skill level required, and the gentleman knows my point, is such that we need to pay more.

Now, I asked the question for doctors not because I think doctors should not be well compensated. They have to go through extraordinary difficulty to acquire the skills that I want in my doctor. I want my doctor to be highly skilled; and, therefore, I know in the marketplace, in a free market, I am going to have to pay that doctor, society is going to have to pay that doctor, commensurate with the skills required.

What I suggested during my response to the intervention of the gentleman was that we have the requirement for some highly skilled people in the Federal service. The Federal Government does some extraordinarily difficult, complicated things requiring high skills. NIH doctors. That goes into the average my colleague is talking about. But I will tell my colleague, the average NIH research doctor at NIH makes far less than his private sector counterpart. I think the gentleman would probably concede that.

So when we take the average across the country and compare not just average salaries but compare skill levels, the report of every report that has come out since I have been in Congress in 1989 when we had Ronald Reagan and George Bush and now Bill Clinton in office, it did not really vary in terms of administrations, was that there was a substantial pay gap between the private sector when we compare comparable duties and responsibilities with the public sector. That is my point.

So my colleague continues to say "average," and that is correct, but many of our people do not have average skills any more than a doctor has average skills.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN).

Mr. COBURN. Mr. Speaker, I would make two points.

I would concede that there is a difference in mix. I do not deny that. But I also say that if we look at the attrition from the Federal Government, it is one-fifth the rate of private industry today. So that, on an economic sense, says that they are not running away and that they are not being underpaid.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, would the gentleman make that point again.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. Speaker, I said the attrition rate in the Federal Government versus private industry is about one-fifth.

Number two is, we did need to raise military pay, but we do not pay military on average anywhere close to what we are paying Federal civilian employees. And to say because we are trying to bring them up to retain when we do not have the retention problem in the rest of the government I think is not an accurate argument.

The final point I would make: In last year's appropriation there was over \$400 million for buildings in this bill that are not in there this year. So the real expenditure that the American people needs to know is this bill has gone up \$640 million. Because we are not buying \$400-plus million worth of buildings this year. We are applying that to run the IRS and some of the other agencies that we run.

So even though the net is only up this additional \$240 million, I think it is accurate to say that. And I am not saying we do not necessarily need to do that. My complaint was on the \$330 million, Mr. Chairman, not the \$240 million.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the conference report for H.R. 2490, the Treasury, Postal Service, and General Government Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2000.

The bill reported out of conference is a sound bill and a significant improvement over the House-passed version. Specifically, the \$240 million that irresponsibly was cut from the House bill at the direction of the Republican leadership, was restored in the conference on the bill. As a result, this conference report is unanimously supported by the both the House and Senate conferees.

The conference report provides \$13.7 billion dollars in funding for the important agencies and programs within the bill. The conference report includes increased funding for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms to enforce our gun and tobacco laws and provides increases in funding for key drug control programs, such as a \$10 million increase for the Drug Free Communities Act, a \$5.5 million increase for the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas program, and a small increase for the drug technology transfer program. Additionally, the conferees approved funding for a much-deserved 4.8% raise for our hard-working federal employees.

I am particularly pleased that the conference report contains two important measures for American families. The first is a provision that would ensure that mothers have the right to breastfeed their babies anywhere on federal property that they have a right to be. It may seem shocking that this legislation is actually needed. However, this provision was attached by Representative CAROLYN MALONEY in response to several instances in which women were asked to stop breastfeeding their babies or leave federal museums, parks, and galleries. Preventing or discouraging mothers from nursing their babies is simply not acceptable. I am pleased that the federal government will now set an example for the country by encouraging the healthy and natural act of breastfeeding.

I am also pleased that Congresswoman MORELLA's provision that allows federal agencies to use their own funds to help low-income federal employees pay for child care was included in the conference report. With the severe shortage of affordable, high-quality child care in our country, this provision is critically needed.

While this is a good bill overall, the strict funding limitations our committee was forced to adhere to means it is certainly not a perfect bill. There are several agencies and programs in this bill that deserved and truly needed additional funding. Specifically, I am very concerned that new federal courthouse construction projects will receive no funding in this bill.

The federal war on crime and drugs has greatly increased the workload of the federal courts. Accordingly, the number of judges and court employees has grown. However, our court facilities have not even come close to keeping pace with this growth. I am particularly aware of this need for new courthouses because the proposed federal courthouse project in my district in Los Angeles is first on the General Services Administration's priority list for fiscal year 2000.

The Central District Court in Los Angeles is the largest district court in the nation, covering seven counties and over 17 million people. The court still operates out of the original courthouse, built over 60 years ago, in 1938. The existing facility lacks the adequate space to house the current court operations. In fact, according to the Judicial Conference, these facilities were officially "out of space" in 1995. This lack of space has created delays, inefficiencies, and large backlogs of cases.

Moreover, security is insufficient to protect those who work in and utilize the court facilities. Among other problems, the Judicial Conference found that the current facilities in Los Angeles have "critical security concerns," including "life-threatening" security deficiencies documented by the U.S. Marshals service. These conditions are simply unacceptable.

In addition, not providing the funding needed to modernize our court facilities will only cost us more money in the long run. According to GSA delaying funding of new courthouse projects increases costs by an average of 3 to 4% annually, meaning that the 16 courthouses on GSA's priority list, which would cost \$532 million in FY 2000, will cost the taxpayers significantly more in years to come. I sincerely hope that the Administration and my colleagues in Congress will not allow this short-sighted strategy regarding out nation's courts to continue.

In closing, given the current budgetary constraints, the conference report on the Treasury, Postal and General Government Appropriations bill is a fair bill. Chairman KOLBE and Ranking Member HOYER deserve to be commended for crafting a sound bill under these adverse circumstances. As a new member of the Appropriations Committee, I am pleased to support this conference report and I urge my colleagues to do so as well.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this conference report.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is an example of bipartisan leadership at its best. And I want to commend Chairman KOLBE and Ranking Member HOYER for their tireless work on this bill.

I am particularly pleased that this bill includes strong language dealing with the Federal Election Commission.